



12th Sunday of Luke

The Reading is from Luke 17:12-19

At that time, as Jesus entered a village, He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When He saw them He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests."

And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus's feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then said Jesus: "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him: "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

Resurrectional Apolytikion in the Grave Tone

Thou didst abolish death by Thy Cross; Thou didst open Paradise to the thief; Thou didst transform the myrrh-bearers' lamentation, and didst bid Thine Apostles to preach that Thou art risen, O Christ God, granting great mercy to the world.

Seasonal Kontakion in the First Tone

Your birth sanctified a Virgin's womb and properly blessed the hands of Symeon. Having now come and saved us O Christ our God, give peace to Your commonwealth in troubled times and strengthen those in authority, whom You love, as only the loving One.

Discussion

This Gospel reading should truly teach us what thankfulness to God is, what service to God is, what our participation in the Eucharist is, because precisely here is where that deep thankfulness is expressed, when we give ourselves to Him, thereby taking Him into ourselves and living with Him.

Gratitude ...because we did not return to give back the extraordinary gifts that the Lord had given us – forgiveness of our sins and the healing of our life. We receive them often without understanding the great mercy that the Lord is showing us; we do not return to thank Him, to serve Him with this gift, but rather try to live with them independently, making use of these gifts for our own lives. And it turns out that we lose them.

Look at what we have endured during the pandemic: loss of life, health, the freedom to come and go as we please, going out to eat, movies, sporting events, **COMING TO CHURCH**. Perhaps we were taking things for granted. Nothing teaches humility, appreciation and gratitude like losing that which we are taking for granted!

“Everything comes down to our relationship with the Triune God – the God of love. All is based on love and freedom. On the unconditional love of God, and the freedom we have to respond to that love with love. Love to all people, whether they are non-Christians and non-believers. Respect for all. Love for all. Witness to this truth of love. This is what our faith is about. This is true Orthodoxy.” (Archbishop Anastasios)

God has given us his image in creation, restored it through his incarnation, shed light in the dark places of the heart, removed the walls of the prison of sin and death, and placed us in his heavenly kingdom, but we remain paralyzed, unable to be free. unable to love God, ourselves, and our neighbors without limits.

Unless we do the uncomfortable work of stretching out beyond our self-imposed limits (for they are all now “self-imposed”) by daring to live in a way that recognizes the truth of the freedom granted to us, then we will remain in a little space, living in little ways that constrict and confine, inflicting pain on ourselves and others because we refuse to see and refuse to grow into this new reality. The freedom granted is the freedom to love and to be loved without limits.

Today is the feast day of St. Anthony. He was the first of the Desert Fathers, struggling in aestheticism in the barren wilderness. Remember that Christ, after His Baptism, as recorded in Matthew and Luke, went into the desert and was tempted by the devil and overcame him there. St. Anthony’s life is a great example of emulating Christ in our fight against evil and love for mankind.

St. Anthony the Great

(From the GOARCH website)

Saint Anthony, the Father of monks, was born in Egypt in 251 of pious parents who departed this life while he was yet young. On hearing the words of the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor" (Matt. 19:21), he immediately put it into action. Distributing to the poor all he had, and fleeing from all the turmoil of the world, he departed to the desert. The manifold temptations he endured continually for the span of twenty years are incredible. His ascetic struggles by day and by night, whereby he mortified the uprisings of the passions and attained to the height of dispassion, surpass the bounds of nature; and the report of his deeds of virtue drew such a multitude to follow him that the desert was transformed into a city, while he became, so to speak, the governor, lawgiver, and master-trainer of all the citizens of this newly-formed city.

The cities of the world also enjoyed the fruit of his virtue. When the Christians were being persecuted and put to death under Maximinus in 312, he hastened to their aid and consolation. When the Church was troubled by the Arians, he went with zeal to Alexandria in 335 and struggled against them in behalf of Orthodoxy. During this time, by the grace of his words, he also turned many unbelievers to Christ.

Saint Anthony began his ascetic life outside his village of Coma in Upper Egypt, studying the ways of the ascetics and holy men there, and perfecting himself in the virtues of each until he surpassed them all. Desiring to increase his labors, he departed into the desert, and finding an abandoned fortress in the mountain, he made his dwelling in it, training himself in extreme fasting, unceasing prayer, and fierce conflicts with the demons. Here he remained, as mentioned above, about twenty years. Saint Athanasius the Great, who knew him personally and wrote his life, says that he came forth from that fortress "initiated in the mysteries and filled with the Spirit of God." Afterwards, because of the press of the faithful, who deprived him of his solitude, he was enlightened by God to journey with certain Bedouins, until he came to a mountain in the desert near the Red Sea, where he passed the remaining part of his life.

Saint Athanasius says of him that "his countenance had a great and wonderful grace. This gift also he had from the Saviour. For if he were present in a great company of monks, and any one who did not know him previously wished to see him, immediately coming forward he passed by the rest, and hurried to Anthony, as though attracted by his appearance. Yet neither in height nor breadth was he conspicuous above others, but in the serenity of his manner and the purity of his soul." So Passing his life, and becoming an example of virtue and a rule for monastics, he reposed on January 17 in the year 356, having lived altogether some 105 years.

Apolytikion of Anthony the Great

Fourth Tone

O Father Anthony, you imitated the zealous Elijah. You followed the straight paths of the Baptist and became a desert dweller. By prayer you confirmed the universe. Wherefore, intercede with Christ our God to save our souls.

Kontakion of Anthony the Great

Second Tone

Forsaking the uproars of life O venerable one, you completed your life in quiet, fully imitating the Baptist. Therefore, we honor you with him, O Anthony, Father of Fathers.

